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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 09/20/07

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(1) Government: UN antiterrorism resolution clearly reflects UN wishes for continued refueling operation

NIKKEI ONLINE (Full)
13:51, September 20, 2007

The UN Security Council has adopted a resolution that includes words of appreciation for the multinational maritime interdiction operations (MIO). The government has taken this as indicating that the international community clearly welcomes the continuation of the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling operations on the Indian Ocean. Chief Cabinet Secretary Kaoru Yosano in this morning's press conference said: "It is significant that Japan's refueling operations have gained extremely high praise from the UN Security Council members. The United Nation's desire that operations continue is now clear."

Referring to the Democratic Party of Japan's (Minshuto or DPJ) adamant opposition to continuing such operations, Yosano stated: "I think DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa believes in a UN-centered diplomacy. (Such thinking) must be practiced by respecting the UN's wishes, while operating within our constitutional restrictions." He thus expressed hopes for the DPJ to turn around its opposition to continuing the refueling mission based on the new UN resolution.

Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura also told the press this morning: "I would like to see (the DPJ) become more sensitive to international efforts and wishes." Defense Minister Masahiko Komura took this view: "No member voted against the resolution, with all

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valid votes approving it. If this is not international opinion, what is?"

(2) Foreign Minister Machimura welcomes adoption of UNSC resolution, refers to maritime interdiction component

ASAHI ONLINE NEWS (Full)
September 20, 2007, 12:27 p.m.

Speaking to reporters at the Foreign Ministry this morning about the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopting a resolution making mention of the maritime interdiction operation (MIO), Foreign Minister Machimura said: "Japan welcomes the adoption of the resolution. The judgment has again been made that it is necessary for Japan as a responsible member of the international community to continue its mission." Machimura revealed that in the recent Japan-Australia foreign ministerial held on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference in Australia early this month, Japan asked the US' cooperation on the adoption of a new resolution.

Russia abstained from voting. In this regard Machimura noted: "The important thing is that the resolution has been adopted. This fact does not reduce any aspect of the significance of the resolution." Defense Minister Komura, as well, stressed the effectiveness of the resolution at a press briefing this morning, saying: "(The effectiveness of the resolution) has not been lost in any way. No member voted against the resolution. The valid votes numbered 14, and all votes were in favor of the resolution. If that doesn't speak for the will of the international community, what does?"

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yosano sought to check the DPJ's opposition at a press briefing this morning when he said: "The UNSC resolution has recognized the importance of the past refueling operations, praised the activities of foreign countries, and declared the need for the operations to be continued. It reflects the UN's desire."

(3) LDP presidential race: Eight faction heads secretly coordinating formation of new cabinet and party leadership

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
September 20, 2007

While former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda taking the lead in the ongoing campaign for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidential election, many LDP lawmakers are now interested in the roster of the party's new executives, as well as the lineup of the new cabinet ministers, which will be picked after the Sept. 23 presidential race. Fukuda has taken a cautious stance toward a large-scale change of the current cabinet, citing the Diet being in session. However, each faction has high hopes for a large-scale change in the cabinet lineup. Faction heads have begun to hold discussions behind closed doors.

Fukuda indicated on Sept. 16 that in case he became prime minister, it would be difficult to drastically reshuffle the cabinet members. He stated: "Since the Diet is in session, new ministers will have to take the floor to answer questions. So I won't be able to make big changes."

After the new cabinet is inaugurated on the 25th, the new prime minister is expected to deliver a policy speech on the 28th. The new

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cabinet ministers will be besieged with questions. With the issue of the "politics and money" scandals still alive, the new prime minister will not have sufficient time to carry out a thorough background check on the members of his cabinet.

Many in the LDP think that Chief Cabinet Secretary Yosano should be replaced by a person close to Fukuda. Machimura faction members have rumored that Hiroyuki Hosoda or Nariaki Nakayama should be named chief cabinet secretary.

A senior LDP member with close ties to Fukuda proposed retaining most ministers of the Abe cabinet and reshuffling the cabinet after the current extraordinary Diet session ends or before next year's regular Diet session is convened. Fukuda appears to be inclined to accept such a view.

However, it remains to be seen if the tide will turn as Fukuda hopes.

"Secretary General Koga, congratulations," a House of Councillors member said in a Koga faction meeting last night to Makoto Koga. Many in the faction seemed to be expecting Koga to become secretary general.

The Koga faction's position is that the secretary general's post should be given to the faction since the thinking is that it created the trend of backing Fukuda in the party leadership race.

The Tanigaki faction, which proactively worked to set up a support system for Fukuda in cooperation with Koga and other members, predicts that this is a good chance for it to get one of the three key LDP posts.

Each faction's desire for cabinet posts is strong. In order to play up its desire for cabinet posts, one faction included its members waiting to enter the cabinet in a list of LDP lawmakers recommending Fukuda to run in the presidency.

A person close to Fukuda is concerned that if he accepts the requests from various factions, he will inevitably be criticized by the media for granting rewards.

Former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, honorary chairman of the Machimura faction, and former Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa has begun coming into contact with faction heads and senior members. They seem to be trying to find a middle ground, while listening to their requests, but coordination seems likely to stall.

(4) Poll on LDP presidential election, political parties

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
September 17, 2007

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage, rounded off. Bracketed figures denote proportions to all respondents.)

Q: Which political party do you support now? (Figures in parentheses denote the results of a survey taken Sept. 13.)

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 32 (30)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 24 (28)

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New Komeito (NK) 1 (3)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 2 (2)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1 (1)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0 (0)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0 (0)
Other political parties 0 (0)
None 35 (30)
No answer (N/A) + don't know (D/K) 5 (6)

Q: Are you interested in the LDP presidential election? (Figures in parentheses denote the results of a survey taken Sept. 8-9, 2006.)

Yes 69 (63)
No 29 (35)

Q: Yasuo Fukuda and Taro Aso have announced their candidacies for the LDP presidential election. Which one do you think is appropriate for the next prime minister? (One choice only)

Yasuo Fukuda 53
Taro Aso 21

Q: (For those who picked Fukuda) Why?

Because his policies and ideals are good 17 (9)
Because he's stable 62 (33)
Because he's friendly 17 (9)

Q: (For those who picked Aso) Why?

Because his policies and ideals are good 36 (8)
Because he's stable 22 (5)
Because he's friendly 34 (7)

Q: Which type do you think is better for the next prime minister? (One choice only)

Decisive type to push ahead 31
Coordinative type to listen well to others 62

Q: What would you like the next prime minister to pursue first? (One choice only)

Pensions 32
Social divide 30
Foreign, security policies 16
Fiscal reconstruction 19

Q: Prime Minister Abe has been positive about constitutional revision. Would you like the next prime minister to take over this stance?

Yes 45
No 45

Q: Would you like the next prime minister to take over Prime Minister Abe's education reform policy?

Yes 63
No 28

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Q: Prime Minister Abe has taken over Prime Minister Koizumi's reform drive. This weighs economic growth and competition. Would you like the next prime minister to take over this reform drive?

Yes 54

No 36

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted from the afternoon of Sept. 15 through the evening of Sept. 16 over the telephone on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. Respondents were chosen from among the nation's voting population on a three-stage random-sampling basis. Valid answers were obtained from 1,152 persons (65 PERCENT).

(5) Poll on Abe cabinet, political parties, LDP race, MSDF refueling mission

SANKEI (Page 5) (Abridged)
September 18, 2007

Questions & Answers
(Figures shown in percentage, rounded off.)

Q: Do you support the new Abe cabinet?

Yes 20.0 (38.0)

No 68.7 (42.9)

Don't know (D/K) + Can't say which (CSW) 11.3 (19.1)

Q: Which political party do you support?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 30.5 (28.2)

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 25.9 (30.9)

New Komeito (NK) 4.9 (5.6)

Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 3.1 (2.3)

Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1.6 (1.1)

People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0.5 (0.2)

New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0.5 (0.6)

Other answers (O/A) 1.0 (1.6)

None 30.5 (28.3)

D/K + Can't say (C/S) 1.5 (1.2)

Q: How do you evaluate Prime Minister Abe and his cabinet on the items listed below?

His cabinet's performance

Yes 21.5

No 69.5

D/K+CSW 9.0

His cabinet's personal character

Yes 60.0

No 31.8

D/K+CSW 8.2

His leadership

Yes 7.5

No 85.1

D/K+CSW 7.4

Foreign policy

Yes 40.2

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No 45.1

D/K+CSW 14.7

Education reform

Yes 25.3

No 58.6

D/K+CSW 16.1

Economic policy

Yes 14.3

No 69.8

D/K+CSW 15.9

Efforts for constitutional revision

Yes 26.7

No 58.3

D/K+CSW 15.0

Response to pension issues

Yes 26.9

No 65.7

D/K+CSW 7.4

Response to politics-and-money issues

Yes 12.0

No 80.3

D/K+CSW 7.7

His political approach

Yes 10.1

No 76.3

D/K+CSW 13.6

Timing for his resignation

Yes 11.0

No 82.1

D/K+CSW 6.9

Reason for his resignation

Yes 18.7

No 66.7

D/K+CSW 14.6

Q: Which candidate do you support in the LDP presidential election?

Yasuo Fukuda 55.9

Taro Aso 28.1

D/K+CSW 16.0

Q: What do you think is important for the post-Abe leader?

Confidence

Yes 69.1

No 22.1

D/K+CSW 8.8

Experience, actual results

Yes 64.1

No 29.5

D/K+CSW 6.4

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Friendliness

Yes 54.2

No 38.1

D/K+CSW 7.7

Leadership ability

Yes 74.1

No 19.2

D/K+CSW 6.7

Freshness

Yes 33.0

No 57.1

D/K+CSW 9.9

Policy expertise

Yes 68.4

No 19.5

D/K+CSW 12.1

Public mindset

Yes 66.0

No 25.2

D/K+CSW 8.8

Q: Who do you think is most appropriate for the next prime minister?

Yasuo Fukuda 27.7
Junichiro Koizumi 15.0
Yoichi Masuzoe 13.2
Taro Aso 10.3
Yuriko Koike 0.9
Kaoru Yosano 0.3
Other ruling party lawmakers 2.0
Ichiro Ozawa 12.2
Other opposition party lawmakers 3.9
None 12.1
D/K+CSW 2.4

Q: What would you like the next prime minister to pursue first?

Pensions 27.7
Social divide 27.2
Tax reform, including consumption tax 10.2
Politics and money 10.1
Education reform 8.3
Global warming 5.9
Constitutional revision 3.3
Security 2.8
North Korea 2.5
D/K+C/S 2.0

Q: When would you like the House of Representatives to hold its next election?

Within the year 28.3 (28.3)
Next year 46.0 (46.2)
The year after next 22.5 (22.3)
D/K+C/S 3.2 (3.2)

Q: Do you support continuing the Maritime Self-Defense Force's

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refueling activities in the Indian Ocean?

Yes 48.7
No 39.1
D/K+CSW 12.2

Q: Do you think you are a floating voter with no party in particular to support?

Yes 57.5 (52.0)
No 38.6 (44.6)
D/K+CSW 3.9 (3.4)

(Note) Figures in parentheses denote the results of the last survey conducted in August.

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted Sept. 15-16 by the Sankei Shimbun and Fuji News Network (FNN) over the telephone on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, a total of 1,000 persons were sampled from among males and females, aged 20 and over, across the nation.

(6) DPJ set to continue opposing Indian Ocean mission even if new UN resolution adopted

SANKEI (Page 1) (Abridged slightly)
September 20, 2007

The government used to always be on the defensive in dealing with the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto or DPJ) on the propriety of the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling operations in the Indian Ocean, but yesterday, it finally switched to an offensive posture. The government is specifically trying to continue the refueling operations by taking advantage of a yet-to-be-adopted new UN Security Council resolution on Afghanistan (TN: adopted on Sept. 20, Japan time). The resolution includes words of appreciation for the

US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), including the MSDF operations. A senior Foreign Ministry indicated that the new resolution is intended to weaken the DPJ's logic behind its opposition to an extension of the refueling mission.

The government began making serious efforts in late August, immediately after Prime Minister Abe reshuffled his cabinet. Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura telephoned the foreign ministers of 13 countries, including such permanent UNSC members as the United States, Britain, and France, and asked for their support and cooperation for an extension of the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law to let the MSDF continue their refueling operations.

But the DPJ has no intention of changing its opposition to a continued MSDF mission.

Upon being briefed yesterday by a senior DPJ lawmaker on the new resolution, President Ichiro Ozawa said: "We are talking about a violation of the Constitution here. They cannot deceive us with a thank-you resolution." In other words, he does not recognize a UN resolution of appreciation as an official UN resolution! Ozawa and the DPJ's official view is that an explicit UN resolution is necessary for engaging in refueling services. Ozawa thinks that Japan is militarily supporting America's war. Diet Affairs Committee Chair Kenji Yamaoka also indicated that a resolution expressing appreciation would not be enough to change the DPJ's standpoint.

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The DPJ's persistent opposition is attributable to Ozawa's security beliefs and the decision that the general public shares his view. In fact, in opinion polls until late August, the majority of respondents voiced opposition to an extension. But "approval" has been increasing in recent polls. This spells trouble for the DPJ, which has been sensitive about public trends.

Asked about changing public opinion at a press conference on Sept. 18, Ozawa said: "We must keep a watchful eye on public trends. We also publicly pledged in our manifesto to (oppose the MSDF mission), and that will not change."

This was followed by the UN resolution of appreciation. As seen in Policy Research Committee Chair Masayuki Naoshima's comment, "I didn't know about the resolution until just recently," the DPJ did not expect the new UN resolution. The UN resolution designed to benefit those who favor the extension of the anti-terror law would naturally affect public opinion.

The DPJ is unlikely to turn around its policy course, however. There seems no one in the DPJ willing to confront Ozawa, who led the party to a landslide victory in the July House of Councillors election. Even Deputy President Seiji Maehara, who has been keeping himself at arms' length from Ozawa, indicated at a Sept. 11 meeting that he would ultimately follow the party's decision.

Meanwhile, former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda and LDP Secretary General Taro Aso, who are vying for the LDP presidency,

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held their joint press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan yesterday. In the session, both Fukuda and Aso indicated that they would seek the DPJ's support for continuing the refueling operations. But specific steps remain unclear, such as whether to introduce new antiterrorism legislation to the current extraordinary Diet session. The Diet would effectively be out of session until the nation's 91st prime minister is determined after the LDP presidential election.

The LDP is tied up in its presidential race, while the DPJ is adamantly refusing to budge even an inch. And meanwhile, the clock is ticking toward the Antiterrorism Law's deadline of Nov. 1, when the SDF would have to leave the Indian Ocean.

(7) Seiron (Opinion) column: DPJ President Ozawa's cosmopolitan sensibility questionable

Tadashi Nishihara, president of the Research Institute for Peace and Security

Southwest Eurasia now center of post-Cold War political changes

Prime Minister Abe's abrupt announcement on Sept. 12 of his intention to step down has caused a significant political vacuum in Japanese politics. Whether Japan can set a course for the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) to continue its refueling mission in the Indian Ocean has become doubtful. Continuing the refueling mission is not necessarily an "international commitment," but the international community strongly hopes that Japan will continue refueling. The MSDF's refueling operation is part of the

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international mission aimed at interdicting terrorism. If Japan puts a halt to the refueling service, it will be taken to mean that Japan has failed to honor its responsibilities to the international community. The major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and particularly its president, Ichiro Ozawa, must be keenly aware of the seriousness of the matter.

With the end of the Cold War, the perception of many governments and scholars was that the major wave of political change had shifted from Europe, where the United States and the Soviet Union had long confronted each other, to East Asia. In actuality, however, changes occurred in the Middle East, Southwest Asia, Central Asia, the southern part of Russia and Islamic nations. After the end of the Cold War, major military conflicts have occurred in those regions, as seen in the Gulf War, the campaigns against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the Iraq war, terrorism by Islamic radicals in Chechnya against the Russian government, and conflicts between Israeli forces and the Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In South Asia, India and Pakistan have declared they possess nuclear weapons. In fact, nuclear technology was passed on by Dr. Khan of Pakistan to Libya, Iran, and North Korea via international underground organizations. There is also the likelihood that Iran's nuclear technology will spread to other Islamic nations.

The security environment in Southwest Eurasia has been increasingly deteriorating. There is no prospect in sight for security to improve in the region because of the expanded armed conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Worsened security environment

A worst-case scenario for the region is that with the national border between Afghanistan and Pakistan in effect vanishing. The Taliban will eventually control both countries and establish a kind of a "Taliban" state. Given the recent administrative mismanagement and corruption of the Musharraf government in Pakistan, we cannot rule out the possibility of Islamic radicals coming to power in that country.

Ozawa needs to inspect refueling

Sea lanes are important for Japan. Japan's concern about sea lanes is that Iran may intimidate foreign vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz by launching missiles. Should an Islamic extremist government be established in Pakistan, maritime safety in the Indian Ocean would be further threatened.

In the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea, terrorist elements, weapons, munitions, narcotics, and secret caches of money are carried by small boats. Some of them may be carried to Afghanistan or Pakistan, from which they may next be transported to Somalia in Africa. Some may go to Afghanistan via Iran. Given this situation, it is important for the MSDF to play the role of providing information about suspicious boats navigating in nearby seas in addition to refueling vessels from friendly countries. The DPJ has charged the MSDF with its refueling vessels from friendly countries taking part in the Iraq War. Although those vessels' major mission

would be to crack down on the flow of weapons, munitions, narcotics, and terrorist elements to Afghanistan via Pakistan, but in doing so, they should have spotted suspicious boats heading for Iraq. But the DPJ is insisting that a clear distinction should be made between

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vessels engaged in operations in Afghanistan and those for the Iraq war. Those who can make this kind of claim are only those who do not know actual situations there.

Ozawa has driven Prime Minister Abe, an advocate for the war on terror, into resigning. If Ozawa is going to call for a halt to the MSDF's refueling mission, he should first inspect the scenes of the refueling. Next, he should visit NATO headquarters in Belgium and meet with representatives of the multinational force (namely, the International Security Assistance Force composed of troops from 37 countries) fighting against terrorists, and suffering a number of casualties in so doing. Can Ozawa have the courage to declare before them that Japan will put a halt to the MSDF's refueling mission for the sake of Japan's national interests and for the sake of the international community?

(8) New Komeito calls for postponing goal to bring primary balance into black: Putting on show of attaching importance to regional districts with eye on next Lower House election; Prevailing view in LDP is negative

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
September 20, 2007

The New Komeito yesterday called for the postponement of the government goal of bringing the primary balance of the central and local governments into the black by fiscal 2011, creating a great sensation in the government and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). With an eye on the next Lower House election, the New Komeito wants to give the impression that it is attaching importance to regional districts. It is motivated by the desire to use this policy shift as a bargaining chip in talks with the LDP. The prevailing view in the LDP is negative toward a postponement. However, with some positive toward the idea, a settlement line on the issue has yet to be found.

Card for power-sharing talks

The New Komeito strongly feels that the public has rejected the structural reform policy. It is increasingly alert to the prospect that if it faces the next Lower House election without correcting that policy, it could become an opposition party. The Finance Ministry has decided to compile a budget on a single-year basis with the aim of turning the primary balance into the black. The New Komeito's idea is that if the goal to bring the primary balance into the black is put off, it would be possible to deal with budgetary funds in a flexibly manner, including boosting funds for public work-related expenses.

Another aim is to set higher barriers against power-sharing talks with the LDP on Sept 24. Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda and Secretary General Taro Aso, both are running in the LDP presidential race, are calling for talks with the DPJ, but they have never referred to the coalition relationship with the New Komeito. The New Komeito is apparently motivated by the desire to obtain fruit for other policies, while playing the card of postponing the goal to bring the primary balance into the black.

The New Komeito's strategy is to secure the consent of the LDP regarding the postponement of an increase in the elderly's share of medical expenses due to be implemented in Apr. 2008 and the equalization of the distribution of revenues from two corporate

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taxes (residence tax and enterprise tax), which are concentrated in urban areas.

Chief cabinet secretary expresses displeasure

However, there are no opinions overtly welcoming the New Komeito's request coming from the government and the LDP. Chief Cabinet Secretary Kaoru Yosano expressed displeasure during a press

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conference on Sept. 19, noting, "We have set the goal of restoring fiscal health. The government is not in a position of commenting on that." Internal Affairs Minister Hiroya Masuda also told reporters: "The government is promoting measures to bring the primary balance into the black. We must abide by that policy."

Many LDP members are also negative toward the New Komeito's request with one noting, "Putting off the goal would mean breaking our pledge to the public," Since Fukuda and Aso advocate the continuation of Koizumi reform, they cannot afford to indicate a flexible stance to the New Komeito's request in their LDP presidential election campaigns.

However, some said, "The proposal is effective as a trial balloon." Despite the crushing defeat suffered by the ruling camp, the government has firmly maintained the spending restraint policy in budget request guidelines for the fiscal 2008 draft budget, following this fiscal year, by cutting public work-related appropriations by 3 PERCENT . Makoto Koga, chairman of the Koga faction, pointed out, "We should look into the possibility of revising budget request guidelines as well."

Curveball for DPJ

The New Komeito's call for putting off the goal to bring the primary balance into the black came as a curveball for the DPJ, which has come up with a proposal for putting on hold a consumption tax hike. Policy Research Committee Chair Masayuki Naoshima during a press conference the same day made a brief comment, "Our goal of bringing the primary balance into the black in fiscal 2011 remains unchanged." He steered clear of making any in-depth statement. His comment indicates that the DPJ has judged that it would not be wise to get involved in the funding issue concerning achieving fiscal soundness.

(9) International fraud groups likely to be behind suspects for allegedly opening bank accounts in Saitama, Chiba for money laundering

ASAHI (Page 39) (Full)
September 20, 2007

Authorities have unearthed members of two groups for allegedly opening bank accounts that were used for money laundering by overseas criminal gangs. In this case, it has been found that the money remitted from abroad was money involved in "case number 419," a well-known international fraud case. Japanese banks were used for laundering large sums of money fraudulently obtained overseas. It is highly likely that one or more overseas crime groups are behind the groups unmasked by the Saitama and Chiba prefectural police departments.

The two unearthed domestic groups - composed of Nigerians and Japanese - have been found to be connected to each other. The two

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police departments intend to prosecute this as a criminal case under the Organized Crime Punishment Law.

It has been revealed that the two groups opened about 140 accounts at city banks, regional banks, and credit cooperatives in Tokyo, Chiba, and Saitama since late 2004 under false company names or personal names. Approximately 2 billion yen was remitted from the US, Canada, Britain, Germany, Australia, and Switzerland. There reportedly was a case in which 60 million yen was remitted at a time.

According to an investigation by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), rich persons abroad were deceived and sent money to such Japanese banks as fees for lawyers in connection

succession to property. Wealthy persons were found to have been victims in the 419 fraud case.

Promptly after money was transferred from overseas, the two groups drew out it at banks or convenience stores and then sent the money to other bank accounts in the US, Canada, Britain, or China. Authorities suspect that they drew out money upon receiving notification on the phone from fraudulent groups in the US, Canada and other countries.

The investigation was launched in response to a financial institution in the US asking a bank in Saitama Prefecture in the spring 2005 to freeze an account, saying that the account was suspected of being used in a fraud case. Last November, there was a contact to the Chiba Prefectural Police Headquarters from a petroleum company in South Africa saying: "The company was about to be the victim of a fraud. The bank designated as the payee is in Chiba."

As a result of investigation based on the information, the Saitama Prefectural Police arrested Asabor Felix Steve, 40, a Nigerian, and the Chiba Prefectural Police arrested Christopher Ariri Noguchi, 39, a Nigerian who obtained Japanese citizenship last year.

The two suspects for alleged involvement in a money laundering scheme came from the same region in Nigeria and are executives at the same travel agency in Toyoshima Ward, Tokyo. Both reportedly got in touch with each other by cell phone. Since their modus operandi were very much like, the two police headquarters suspect that the two groups were moving under the instruction of the same fraud group.

SCHIEFFER